

## CHAPTER 35

### *Al-Fâtir: The Originator*

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 5 sections; 45 verses)

The title of this chapter, *Al-Fâtir*, is taken from the Divine attribute mentioned in its opening verse. *The Originator* of the *samâwât* and the earth sweeps away the old order and generates a new one, because, if truth must prosper, a new generation must be raised to propagate that truth. The chapter is also known as *Al-Malâ'ikah* or The forces which Allâh uses for various purposes, because of the mention, in its opening verse, of *malâ'ikah* which cause human beings attain the nearness of Allâh. For the date of revelation and relation to the previous chapter, see introductory note on last chapter.

The first section speaks of Divine favours to human beings, and the second reasserts the promise that truth will prevail. The third section refers to the rising of a new generation, which will take the place of the old generation that proved itself unfit to promote the cause of truth and justice in the world. The section that follows promises peace, safety, success, and abundance to the believers, while the last section reiterates the law that punishment is due to evil deeds.

### SECTION 1: Divine Favours

In the name of Allâh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

**1** Praise be to Allâh, the Originator of the *samâwât* and the earth, the Maker of the *malâ'ikah*, messengers flying on wings, two, and three, and four.<sup>a</sup> He increases in creation what He pleases.<sup>b</sup> Surely Allâh is Possessor of power over all things.

**1a.** Allâh is here mentioned by his name *Fâtir*, from *fatara*, which means he *clove* or *split*, also he *originated* or *brought a thing into existence newly* or *for the first time*, *it not having existed before* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). There may be reference to the creation of primeval matter in the original significance of *cleaving* or *splitting*. Derived from the same root is *fitrah*, which means *nature* or *constitution* or *natural* or *original quality* in which all human beings are said to have been made — the nature made by Allâh in which He has created human beings (30:30) — and which has therefore been translated as the *faculty of knowing Allâh with which He has created mankind* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). So there may be reference to this *fitrah* in the use of the word *Fâtir*, the *fitrah* or *nature of man* having a close relation with the *Fâtir* or the Maker of that *fitrah*.

The representation of *malâ'ikah* as possessing wings is met with in sacred history, but the *janâh* or *wing of a malik* by no means indicates the fore-limbs of a bird, which fit it for flight. It is a symbol of power enabling these immaterial beings to execute their functions, and in Arabic, the word *janâh* stands for *power*, as you say *huwa maqsûs al-janâh* (lit., *he has the wing clipped*), meaning *he is one who lacks strength* or *power* or *ability*, or *he is impotent* (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by Imâm

*Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faid Murtadâ* and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). *Malâ'ikah* are here spoken of as having two, three or four wings. Is there a reference here to the *rak'ahs* of prayer which are two, three or four in number? The Morning Prayer consists of two *rak'ahs*, the *maghrib* of three and the two afternoon prayers, and the '*Ishâ*' of four *rak'ahs*. In prayer human being holds communion with Allâh and is raised to eminence religiously; he, as it were, flies to Allâh, is on his wings, and the *malâ'ikah* are the agents which make him fly to Allâh, their wings thus standing for the *rak'ahs* of prayer.

**2** Whatever Allâh grants to human beings of (His) mercy, there is none to withhold it, and what He withholds, none can grant thereafter. And He is the Mighty, the Wise.

**3** O human beings, call to mind the favour of Allâh to you. Is there any Creator besides Allâh who provides for you from the *samâ'* and the earth? There is no Deity but He. How are you then turned away?

**4** And if they reject you — truly messengers before you were rejected. And to Allâh are all affairs returned.

**5** O human beings, surely the promise of Allâh is true, so let not the life of this world deceive you. And let not the arch-deceiver deceive you about Allâh.

**6** Surely the *shaitân* is your enemy, so take him for an enemy. He only invites his party to be companions of the burning Fire.

**1b.** The increase in creation may refer in a general sense to the new creation which is going on momentarily in this universe, or there may be a reference here to the increase in the number of the elect which was to be brought about through the Prophet. Or still again, the meaning may be that the power of *malâ'ikah* is not limited to two, three or four wings, for there are angels of mighty power like Gabriel, who is spoken of as having six hundred wings.

**7** Those who disbelieve, for them is a severe chastisement. And those who believe and do good, for them is forgiveness and a great reward.

## SECTION 2: Truth will prevail

**8** Is he whose evil deed is made fair-seeming to him so that he considers it good? — Now surely Allâh leaves in error whom He pleases and guides aright whom He pleases, so let not your *nafs* waste in grief for them. Surely Allâh is Knower of what they do.

**9** And Allâh is He Who sends the winds, so they raise a cloud, then We drive it on to a dead land, and therewith give life to the earth after its death. Even so is the quickening.<sup>a</sup>

**10** Whoever desires might, then to Allâh belongs the might wholly. To Him do ascend the goodly words, and the goodly deed — He exalts it. And those who plan evil — for them is a severe chastisement. And their plans will perish.<sup>a</sup>

**11** And Allâh created you from dust, then from the life-germ, then He made you pairs. And no female bears, nor brings forth, except with His knowledge. And no one living

long is granted a long life, nor is aught diminished of one's life, but it is all in a book. Surely this is easy to Allâh.<sup>a</sup>

**9a.** The quickening here is clearly the quickening to spiritual life.

**10a.** The ultimate triumph of truth and the destruction of falsehood could not be expressed in clearer words. Good words ascend to Allâh, i.e., prosper and bear fruit, and good deeds are exalted, while the evil plans to destroy Truth perish.

**11a.** There is a hint that the seed of truth is sown and generates in a similar manner.

**12** And the two seas are not alike: the one sweet, very sweet, pleasant to drink; and the other salt, bitter. Yet from both you eat fresh flesh and bring forth ornaments which you wear. And you see the ships cleave through it, that you may seek of His bounty and that you may give thanks.

**13** He causes the night to enter in upon the day, and causes the day to enter in upon the night, and He has made subservient the sun and the moon, each one moves to an appointed time. This is Allâh, your *Rabb*; His is the kingdom. And those whom you call upon besides Him own not a straw.<sup>a</sup>

**14** If you call on them, they hear not your call; and if they heard, they could not answer you. And on the day of Resurrection they will deny your associating them (with Allâh). And none can inform thee like the All-Aware One.

### SECTION 3: A New Generation will be raised

**15** O human beings, it is you that have need of Allâh, and Allâh is the Self- Sufficient, the Praised One.

**16** If He please, He will remove you and bring a new creation.

**17** And this is not hard to Allâh.

**18** And no burdened *nafs* can bear another's burden. And if one weighed down by a burden calls another to carry his load, naught of it will be carried, even though he be near of kin. You warn only those who fear their *Rabb* in secret and keep up prayer. And whoever purifies himself purifies himself only for his own good. And to Allâh is the eventual coming.

**13a.** The Arabic word *qitṡmîr* stands for the white point in the back of a date-stone.

**19** And the blind and the seeing are not alike,

**20** Nor the darkness and the light,

**21** Nor the shade and the heat.

**22** Neither are the living and the dead alike. Surely Allâh makes whom He pleases hear, and thou canst not make those hear who are in the graves.<sup>a</sup>

**23** Thou art naught but a warner.

**24** Surely We have sent thee with the Truth as a bearer of good news and a warner. And there are not a people but a warner has gone among them.<sup>a</sup>

**25** And if they reject thee, those before them also rejected — their messengers came to them with clear arguments, and with scriptures, and with the illuminating Book.<sup>a</sup>

**26** Then I seized those who disbelieved, so how (terrible) was My disapproval!

**22a.** Note how devotional truths are conveyed in words relating to physical life. *Those in the graves* are the very men who were actively engaged in opposition to the Prophet. The seeing are those who have their eyes opened spiritually, the light is the religious light, the living are those alive in spirit, and so on.

**24a.** This broad doctrine that a prophet was raised among every nation is taught repeatedly in the Qur'ân, and, curiously enough, it is met with in the earlier revelation at Makkah as well as the later revelation at Madînah. This great truth, which had remained hidden for thousands of years from the wisest men of the world, had shone upon the mind of an unlearned Arabian, who did not even know what nations then existed and what scriptures they possessed. This broad doctrine alone could form the basis of the universality of a Divine message to the whole of mankind. Only he who had the breadth of mind to recognize truth in all could unite all men.

**25a.** See 3:184a.

#### SECTION 4: The Elect

**27** See you not that Allâh sends down water from the clouds, then We bring forth therewith fruits of various hues? And in the mountains are streaks, white and red, of various hues and (others) intensely black.

**28** And of men and beasts and cattle there are various colours likewise. Those of His servants only who are possessed of knowledge fear Allâh. Surely Allâh is Mighty, Forgiving.

**29** Surely those who recite the Book of Allâh and keep up prayer and spend out of what We have given them, secretly and openly, hope for a gain which perishes not<sup>a</sup>—

**30** That He may pay them back fully their rewards and give them more out of His grace. Surely He is Forgiving, Multiplier of reward.

**31** And that which We have revealed to you of the Book, that is the truth, verifying that which is before it.<sup>a</sup> Surely Allâh is Aware, Seer of His servants.

**32** Then We have given the Book as inheritance to those whom We have *chosen* from among Our servants: so of them is he who wrongs himself, and of them is he who takes a middle course, and of them is he who is foremost in deeds of goodness by Allâh's permission.<sup>a</sup> That is the great grace,

**29a.** *Tijârah* literally signifies *a buying and selling for gain*, hence I render the word here as meaning *gain*.

**31a.** Note that as the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân recognizes that prophets were raised in every nation, so it claims that previous revelation contains prophecies which have been fulfilled in the advent of the Holy Prophet. This is an early Makkan revelation.

**33** Gardens of perpetuity, which they enter — they are made to wear therein bracelets of gold and pearls, and their dress therein is silk.<sup>a</sup>

**34** And they say: Praise be to Allâh, Who has removed grief from us! Surely our *Rabb* is Forgiving, Multiplier of reward,<sup>a</sup>

**35** Who out of His grace has made us alight in a house abiding forever; therein toil touches us not nor does fatigue afflict us therein.<sup>a</sup>

**36** And those who disbelieve, for them is Fire of hell; it is not finished with them so that they should die, nor is chastisement thereof lightened to them. Thus We deal retribution on every ungrateful one.

**37** And therein they cry for succour: Our *Rabb*, take us out! We will do good deeds other than those which we used to do! Did We not give you a life long enough, for him to be mindful who would mind? And there came to you the warner. So taste; because for the iniquitous there is no helper.

**32a.** After speaking of the revelation of the Qur'ân to the Prophet, we are told that the Divine Book was now being given as an inheritance to a *chosen* people, i.e., the Muslim community, who are chosen to carry this great message to the whole world. But the chosen people are not all alike. Among the elect are some people who wrong themselves — they do not fulfil Divine commandments. There are others among them who follow a middle course; they are not wrongdoers but they are not very active in the doing of good. There are others still, who are foremost in the doing of good, who are elsewhere called *muqarrabûn* (56:11), those who have attained to nearness to Allâh. It is thus made clear that when a community is spoken of as being a *chosen community*; all members of it are not alike. It is chosen because of those who are foremost in the doing of good, whose example the others should try to follow.

**33a.** The promise refers to this life as well as to the next. See 22:23a, where it is shown that the Caliph 'Umar made Surâqah wear Kisrâ's bracelets of gold.

**34a.** Here is drawn a true picture of paradise: *Who has removed grief from us*. This shows that freedom from grief and anxiety is the real bliss of paradise. The repeated promise to the righteous, that they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve, expresses the same truth, and shows that paradise begins in this life.

**35a.** Note this further description of the paradise of bliss: *where toil and fatigue no more afflict a human being*. It is all peace and satisfaction and the highest bliss.

## SECTION 5: Punishment due to Evil Deeds

**38** Surely Allâh is the Knower of the unseen in the *samâwât* and the earth. Surely He is Knower of what is in the hearts.

**39** He it is Who made you successors in the earth. So whoever disbelieves, his disbelief is against himself. And their disbelief increases the disbelievers with their *Rabb* in naught but hatred; and their disbelief increases the disbelievers in naught but loss.

**40** Say: Have you seen your associates which you call upon besides Allâh? Show me what they have created of the earth! Or have they any share in the *samâwât*? Or, have We given them a Book so that they follow a clear argument thereof? Nay, the wrongdoers hold out promises one to another only to deceive.

**41** Surely Allâh upholds the *samâwât* and the earth lest they come to naught. And if they come to naught, none can uphold them after Him. Surely He is ever Forbearing, Forgiving.

**42** And they swore by Allâh, their strongest oaths, that, if a warner came to them, they would be better guided than any of the nations. But when a warner came to them, it increased them in naught but aversion,<sup>a</sup>

**42a.** There were Jews and Christians in Arabia who were as corrupt as the idolaters of Arabia. The Arabs, therefore, said that, if a prophet came to them as prophets came to other people, they would follow him, and set an example of goodness.

**43** Behaving proudly in the land and planning evil. And the evil plan besets none save the authors of it. So they wait for naught but the way of the ancients. But thou wilt find no alteration in the course of Allâh; and you will find no change in the course of Allâh.

**44** Have they not travelled in the land and seen what was the end of those before them — and they were stronger than those in power? And Allâh is not such that anything in the *samâwât* or the earth can escape Him. Surely He is ever Knowing, Powerful.

**45** And were Allâh to punish human beings for what they earn, He would not leave on the back of it any *dâbbah* (creature),<sup>a</sup> but He respites them till an appointed term; so when their doom comes, then surely Allâh is ever Seer of His servants.

**45a.** Similar words occur in 16:61: “And if Allâh were to destroy human beings for their iniquity, He would not leave therein a single creature”. Evidently by *dâbbah* or *creature* here are meant people bent low on earth, people ignorant of the higher or religious values of life, or the iniquitous; see 27:82a and 34:14a.